

creating:excellence

Business plan 2003-2006



Introduction

We (the South West Regional Development Agency) see regeneration and renewal as part of the same process. The South West Regeneration Centre, **creating:excellence**, is a new initiative to bring people together to learn how regeneration and renewal might be done better, and to share skills and knowledge so that regeneration brings lasting social, economic and environmental benefits for everyone.

For the purpose of **creating:excellence**, we have adopted a wide definition of regeneration and renewal, which includes:

economic development;

sustainability (redevelopment that can be maintained without damaging the environment);

social enterprise; and

community development.

Early discussions with a wide range of stakeholders on the Regeneration Centre decided that the centre for learning must:

- include everyone who has a role to play in regeneration and renewal, including those in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors;
- cover urban and rural areas, and everything in-between;
- recognise the relationship between economic, social and environmental aspects; and
- see the connections between built and natural environments.

The rest of this document sets out the business plan to put the South West Regeneration Centre into practice. It marks a stage of moving from concept and development to services for everyone.

Literally hundreds of people have been involved in defining:

the purpose of the South West Regeneration Centre;

what they want to see delivered to suit their working practices; and

how they want to get involved.

They have taken part in conferences and seminars, and responded to web consultations, phone surveys and e-mails.

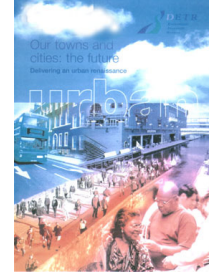
Around 70 people have worked in 'modules' (which we explain later) over 18 months to make sure that the design of the initiative is tailored to people's needs and will be the most effective possible. Another 80 people have also given time to have interviews with us.

We are very grateful to all these people and to the organisations that encouraged their staff to give time to **creating:excellence**. The level of interest suggests that the South West is highly committed to learning and quality and improvement in regeneration practice. This looks encouraging for the future of our region.

Background to creating excellence

National policy

Lord Rogers' Urban Task Force Report ('Our towns and cities', 1999) introduced the concept of 'Regional Centres for Urban Development' and described them as "promoting regional innovation and good practice, co-ordinating urban development training and encouraging community involvement in the regeneration process." The report also highlighted the need for a related network of 'Local Architecture and Design Centres' to support public involvement in the design process.



The Government adopted these themes in the Urban White Paper (November 2000), describing them as regional 'Centres of Excellence' and suggesting they would become important methods of raising skills levels in urban design and development within the regions. The Government has also referred to local architecture and design centres, which have been developed and networked by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. At the heart of the recommendations was the need for a change in the quality of the urban environment (that is, places where we live and work) and the need to involve local people in the process.

The Urban White Paper was closely followed by the Rural White Paper ('Our Countryside: the Future. A fair deal for rural England', 28 November 2000), which also referred to building the skills needed to regenerate market towns. The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (January 2001) also highlighted the need for a change in the level of skills and knowledge of everyone involved in neighbourhood renewal. The action plan was the result of two-and-a-half years' work by the Social Exclusion Unit, drawing on the reports of the Social Exclusion Unit's 18 Policy Action Teams (PATs), two of which specifically examined skills issues (PAT 2 'Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal, December 1999, and PAT 16 'Learning the Lesson', March 2000). PAT 16 made 33 recommendations and proposed a national centre for neighbourhood renewal that is responsible for:



- promoting quality training and development for a wide range of practitioners;
- setting up a knowledge management system for neighbourhood renewal;
- setting up networks and running conferences and workshops to promote joint working;
- promoting cross-professional training; and
- buying in and supporting better research on regeneration.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's Skills and Knowledge Programme (December 2001) highlighted centres of excellence as offering "the chance to bring creativity, independence and coherence to the urban agenda" and approved the Government's recommendation that these centres must deal with social issues that are connected with neighbourhood renewal, as well as physical and economic regeneration.

In his address to the Urban Summit in Birmingham the following year (November 2002), the Chancellor of the Exchequer emphasised the Government's commitment to economic prosperity through raising skills levels.

"...but we must also, more fundamentally, tackle not just the consequences of unemployment and poverty and its symptoms, but the underlying causes -- being aware more than ever before of just how much poverty and deprivation are rooted in low levels of economic activity. People are poor because they have no jobs, no skills for jobs - or if disabled, old or sick, are poor because of inadequate provision where they or their families have had historically low earnings from employment.

And second - and this is the main point I wish to make to you today - we must recognise that the old approaches to renewing economic activity which have been less than successful must give way to the new:

- neither an old-style bricks-and-mortar-only approach which (for example, with the experience of enterprise zones in the 1980s) targeted subsidies for property development, often at huge public cost diverting economic activity from one area to another with no overall economic gain;
- nor the old-style benefits approach which gave hand-outs to compensate for unemployment but provided no real help to get people back to work, leaving whole communities abandoned on the dole;

...both of which failed to tackle the causes of unemployment and poverty or secure long-term environmental regeneration and social inclusion. And both of which failed to invest, as we must, in the forces of renewal - education, training, jobs, enterprise and business development.

So increasingly the emphasis of our approach will be measures to encourage and foster the indigenous skills, talents and potential of local people and communities."

In October 2002 Barbara Roche, Minister for Social Exclusion, Regional Co-ordination and Neighbourhood Renewal, launched the Learning Curve - an action plan for a £21.6 million skills and knowledge programme which promised to put in place a comprehensive learning and development strategy for neighbourhood renewal.

The 23-point action plan targets everyone working to transform England's poorest areas: residents, professionals, regeneration practitioners, councillors, and local and central government officials. It acknowledges that gaps in neighbourhood renewal skills and knowledge need filling in different ways at national, regional and neighbourhood levels, and identifies a framework of skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for delivering effective neighbourhood renewal. As well as identifying what needs to be learnt, the Learning Curve recognises that no one size fits all — different people need different learning methods that involve more than formal training.

More recently, in February 2003 John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, launched the £22 billion Sustainable Communities Plan. The plan highlights the need for the right people with the right skills in the right place, and aims to change how land is used. It also refers to the role of regional centres of excellence and centres of excellence in housing.

At the same time, Mr Prescott also took the opportunity to announce that Sir John Egan will lead a major review of the skills and abilities of the built environment professions needed to deliver sustainable communities (including planning, surveying, regeneration, economic development, architecture, design, construction and manufacturing). The review must also look at:

- the skills needed by professional and technical staff in both the public and private sector, elected local authority members and members of local strategic partnerships;
- the gaps and shortcomings in skills and abilities;
- the implications for training and development and how these might be better delivered – especially through trial projects; and
- how to develop systems for sharing knowledge, good practice and experience of ways in which these skills can be provided across the country, and develop new approaches.

The review will consult stakeholders to find out their views and influence analysis, before a report is put forward to the Deputy Prime Minister in early 2004. The report is expected to make recommendations, including options for action by the Government and others (including the professional institutions).

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), with the support of the Urban Policy Unit, are continuing to support the cause, and have issued guidance recommending a wider approach than urban design, but with links to the existing centres of architecture.

Our response

Following from the Urban White Paper, we began with key stakeholders in early 2001. These stakeholders included the Government Office for the South West, the University of the West of England (UWE), Community Fund, CABE and others. We set up a steering group, and by autumn 2001 had agreed a brief and asked UWE to carry out a feasibility study for setting up the Regional Centre for Urban and Rural Regeneration and Renewal.

The study reported in December 2001 and identified the main activities as:

training and learning;

sharing information and experience; and

evaluation.

The study proposed setting up four modules covering:

architecture, planning and the built environment;

regeneration and renewal;

resources and funding; and

joint working and partnership.

The proposals were approved at a regional conference held in April 2002 in Taunton (which around 80 people went to). The module groups were also formally confirmed, and members chosen based on self-selection, recommendation or invitation.

creating:excellence modules and wider involvement

Chairs were then elected and the groups were given responsibility for drafting temporary action plans. The plans were to identify 'early wins' (opportunities for success early in the project's life) and suggest a programme of activities, but the modules did not have to make long-term proposals or commitments that could harm the outcome of a business planning exercise (the brief for which was ordered in July 2002).

At the same time, we produced a job description for a development manager to monitor the development of **creating:excellence**. We advertised the position in autumn 2002, and we chose Dominic Murphy for the position. Dominic took up the post in January 2003.

By this time we had started to put the action plans into practice. The module for resources and funding, re-branded as CERF (Creating Excellence in Regional Funding), held a consultation event in Taunton in November 2002 to listen to stakeholders and gather ideas for a development plan, which was produced in spring 2003. The steering group appointed Grayling, marketing and public relations consultants, who produced a marketing and communications plan 'From Zero to Hero' in December 2002.

The regeneration and renewal module were in the process of preparing a brief to look at skills and learning needs in regeneration and renewal in the South West. UWE and Cornwall Business School were then appointed to carry out the study, which is now nearly complete.

Business planning process

In April 2003, the steering group of **creating:excellence** asked us to carry out a business planning process, which resulted in this plan. Also, MSS Research reported on the results of a phone survey of 200 people they had carried out on awareness of **creating:excellence** and regeneration issues. Recently, the Architecture Planning and the Built Environment (APBE) module have appointed consultants De Facto to advise on a strategy for improving design.

We held a series of road shows in April and May 2003 as part of building awareness and consulting on activities, organisation and so on for the business planning process. We held events in Bournemouth (30 April), Truro (2 May), Bristol (8 May), Exeter (9 May) and Gloucester (12 May). Around 200 people came to the five road shows. We held the launch of the Regeneration South West Network in Wellington on 15 May, and 70 people came along.

We carried out an extensive consultation process from May to July. We interviewed around 80 people either by phone or in meetings. We chose those people as key stakeholders in the potential funding or delivery of **creating:excellence** services, and also to widen representation beyond those who went to the road shows. For example, we spoke to the regional Law Society, the regional secretariat for one of the major accountancy institutes, private developers, the Chamber of Commerce, and professionals, as these groups were under-represented in the previous consultation (because they don't normally register on contact databases).

We invited all those who went to the events or who we interviewed while preparing the draft plan to a second regional conference held in the Kings College in Taunton on 23 July. Around 70 people came to learn about the proposals to be included in this plan and other progress **creating:excellence** has made.

Steve Woollet of the South West Forum spoke about the network. Professor Murray Stewart spoke on the findings of the work UWE and Cornwall Business School had carried out on learning needs, and Mark Pearson of the Bristol Architecture Centre and Ingrid Heseltine of De Facto spoke on the emerging activities of Design South West.

The consultation process continued when we posted the draft business plan on our website in August, to allow for comments before final consideration by the steering group in September.

With this business plan approved, **creating:excellence** will move to the next stage, including securing funding, recruiting staff and so on, as detailed in the rest of the plan.

The purpose of creating:excellence

We are developing the South West Regeneration Centre to promote learning and improve skills in regeneration and renewal by creating new links between professionals and communities. It aims to make sure that economic, social and environmental solutions work for, rather than against, each other.

The extensive consultation (five road shows, 20 meetings and 75 interviews) was necessary to help us produce this plan, and has helped to shape the services and activities we describe in the next section.

Some of the general findings from the consultation were as follows.

- We need to explain the reasons for the centre – some people were sceptical that there is a need.
- The use of the word 'centre' in the second strap line is adding confusion – **creating:excellence** may need to consider changing it.
- Some people prefer a 'hub and satellite' approach.
- A website is an essential, but not the only, method of delivery.
- There is still potential for working closely with other partnership organisations (for example, Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTI) and Single Local Management Centres) on issues of common interest.
- Independence – people were concerned that we, as the main funder, would decide the agenda.

Specific findings relating to providing information and advice include the following.

- **creating:excellence** should be the first contact point for regional information and signposting (directing people to the information they need) – this means the centre should have a central store for all regional studies using web database and links.
- Information is needed on existing networks, funding advisors and funding programmes.
- Sharing information is important – e-newsletters as well as printed material.
- There had to be a strong link to the South West Observatory in providing baseline data (data we can assess progress against), but close working would be needed to avoid overlaps or gaps.
- Advisory services – people are divided about a role for **creating:excellence** helping some groups or taking positive action to make sure those groups are served.

- Don't divide the agenda – regeneration cuts across all sectors.

Specific findings relating to learning include the following.

- Web-based delivery is the future and supported through the UWE and Cornwall Business School study, as there is no shortage of relevant providers or courses.
- At the moment, Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) are not sure about working on regeneration and renewal skills – an issue being taken up on a national basis.
- Continuing professional development (CPD) learning is of variable quality – this means that **creating:excellence** may need to influence nationally-defined training schemes.
- Networking opportunities are at least as important as formal training.

Some of the findings relating to quality include the following.

- Few people saw regeneration as a profession – no formal accreditation was wanted.
- Advice from funding advisors, consultants and courses is of variable quality – this means that some type of accreditation is needed, but everyone wants to avoid the red tape of bureaucracy.
- On awards for achievement, there were mixed views – some finding them valuable for recognising achievement, others questioning their value in learning (you can learn more from mistakes).
- What is signposted should be carefully chosen – the best examples of good practice.
- The **creating:excellence** contacts database needs further development – this will be dealt with by the launch of the network and a task group on the issue.

Messages from the consultation were not always consistent, and it is clear that the centre “cannot be all things to all people”. Some of the dilemmas arising from the road shows include the following.

- We don't need another network – we really need a direct route to information and advice.
- A centre is a good idea, but it needs to be local.
- We would be prepared to pay for some services – but if the Government wants some services, the Government should pay for them.
- We don't want accreditation – but we do want better standards.

A detailed report on the discussions arising at the road shows, together with a summary of the questions asked at the Regional Conference, has been produced by Grayling. You can get the report and summary from them or from Dominic Murphy.

The business planning process also included close working with the module groups and their chairs, and interviews with a number of key stakeholders. The responses are confidential. We have included the findings in this plan, and where the plan is different from views we received, we have tried to provide the reasons and arguments for our view.

One of the clear and consistent themes emerging from all the consultation was agreement on the values for **creating:excellence**, as follows.

- Not repeating existing activity – it must add value
- Based on evidence
- Open, honest and independent
- Focused on practice not policy
- Challenging and influencing, not a campaigning organisation
- Inclusive and accessible
- Self-regulating and evaluating
- Excellent in what it does, or not doing it until it can do so excellently

Regional activity

To achieve the outcomes **creating:excellence** is aiming to achieve, it needs to be clear on its objectives. Those taken from the consultation process suggest these are:

- making regeneration activity serve its client group effectively;
- bringing people together;
- reducing social exclusion (the barriers that prevent people from taking part in society, for example, poverty and a lack of education);
- reducing inequalities;
- promoting sustainability;
- promoting partnership and good practice;
- considering how other professional disciplines and areas of work affect each other; and
- promoting decisions to be made at the lowest possible level.

From these points, we suggest the purpose of **creating:excellence** will be to raise standards in delivery and practice of regeneration through:

- learning (co-ordination, promotion and supply);
- knowledge (best practice and research);
- raising awareness (networking, events and advocacy); and
- acting as a go-between (building trust, sharing agendas and co-funding).

Who is creating:excellence for?

The centre will work with a wide range of people to provide services for:

local community groups and voluntary and community organisations, enterprises and development trusts;

regeneration professionals;

planners;

builders;

local-authority officers and members;

parish councils;

public service providers such as hospitals, schools and the police;

housing associations;

environmental groups;

arts groups;

sports groups; and

equality groups.

For the purpose of **creating:excellence**, we have adopted a wide definition of regeneration and renewal, which includes:

economic development;

sustainability;

social enterprise; and

community development.

Professionalism, not professions

Professionalism raises a dilemma. The consultation, from responses to road shows and interviews, revealed a great reluctance to see formal accreditation procedures being used to raise standards. Yet, at the same time, there is general agreement on the need to raise the quality of design, buying in goods and services, learning courses, funding advice and so on. Making regeneration more professional was seen as risking excluding people and ideas.

The issue isn't just local. Many of the professions have continuing professional development (CPD) arrangements to make sure that professionals maintain their standards and continue to learn and stay up to date. Our findings through interviews reveal a mixed practice. In general, CPD arrangements for members of professions related to regeneration are often not particularly demanding. This is an area that Sir John Egan will examine.

What can we rely on the national level to provide?

Policy framework, research, expertise

Our research for the plan included detailed discussions with centres of excellence in each of the other regions about their activities, organisation and planned funding.

The findings were confidential to the national network of centres of excellence, but we have taken them into account when developing the plan and the potential for funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). You can get more information on the activities in other regions from Dominic Murphy.

creating:excellence will operate on a national level and provide links to websites that are devoted to good practice in regeneration and renewal. It will also organise visits to other regions and host visitors from other regions.

What can we rely on the local level to provide?

Delivery, local connections, community strategies and plans

All regeneration and renewal activity takes place at a level local to someone. Wherever this may be, the local authority (members and officers) will be involved in all stages. In many cases there will be local voluntary organisations and community groups involved in the design and, sometimes, the delivery of regeneration and renewal, through local partnerships or even as contractors. They play an important role in maintaining the success of projects and, increasingly, in delivering them.

Community Development Trusts increasingly take a lead in providing workspace for community enterprise businesses and in training. The private sector must involve local communities when working in their area, and can offer employment benefits in both developing and running projects. Local residents, who should be the main people who benefit from regeneration and renewal projects, are often overlooked – their views are as important as any to the success or failure of projects.

SWOT analysis

creating:excellence has been exceptionally fortunate in being able to involve so many people in getting the centre up and running. It is important that we develop the business plan in a way that maintains the enthusiasm and involvement of all those concerned. However, for **creating:excellence** to do its job, it needs to welcome the challenges of raising quality. To do this, it needs to re-focus and link to existing good-practice programmes and projects. The following analysis reveals the **strengths**, **weaknesses**, **opportunities** and **threats** (SWOT analysis) for **creating:excellence** now.

Strengths

- Good involvement – 54 organisations (68 people) in the steering group and working modules.
- 200 people going to road shows, 97 going to the CERF event, and 70 going to the launch of the network.
- Funding from us and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU).
- Supported by national policies.

Weaknesses

- The wide range of organisations involved in regeneration makes the potential network very large.
- The size of region makes it hard for practitioners to meet often.
- Professional disciplines do not serve communities well – but in-depth expertise is needed.
- Some narrow views, for example, all regeneration is about design.
- There is a shortage of regeneration, managerial and other skills.
- A lot of activity is poor quality and so is not effective.
- Old mistakes are repeated and little is learnt from other people's experience.
- There are lots of stop-start initiatives, which mean that expertise and funding are applied short term.

Opportunities

- Putting people together and improving regeneration networking.
- Networking and joining groups.

- Becoming a network of networks.
- Overcoming geographic barriers.
- Creating excellence centres.
- Community, clubs and cafés.
- Events.
- Newsletters and so on.

Threats

- Confusion over the name and role.
- Other initiatives (for example, Market and Coastal Towns Initiative and the Single Local Management Centre) carry out the same work.
- Possible key stakeholders see it as irrelevant or not a priority.
- The size of the region reduces its effect.

Activities to deliver excellence

From the results of consultation, and the analysis of the purpose of the initiative, we have been able to define the activities that **creating:excellence** should deliver. This does not mean that all these services should be directly delivered by employed staff. Instead, they will be achieved through a combination of:

- direct service delivery;
- sub-contracted service delivery;
- representing the views of regeneration practitioners and influencing decision-makers;
- acting as a go-between and persuasion; and
- co-ordination and support for learning events.

Learning

Regeneration is not a profession with a defined body of knowledge. You cannot become a chartered regenerator. If a person or group of people decided they would like to regenerate a run-down estate – possibly the one they live or work in – they might make a list of skilled people they need and come up with the following.

Architect	Community development officer
Builder	Community safety officer
Planner	Organiser of public meetings and seminars
Quantity surveyor	Councillor
Lawyer	Funding advisor
Structural engineer	Business planning advisor
Transport engineer	Landscape architect

Also, depending on the project, they may need specialists in childcare, education, healthcare, business development and so on.

All these people will be needed and will carry out their roles much better if, as well as their specialist knowledge, they have some general skills in common. These will include an understanding of:

- the relationship between social and economic growth and run-down areas;
- social exclusion;
- sustainability;
- partnership;
- communication;
- national and regional policy on regeneration; and

- funding organisations and their objectives.

This relationship between skills explains why one main purpose of **creating:excellence** identified by the people we consulted was simply putting these separate groups into regular contact with each other so that skills 'rub off'. In some cases, people have suggested very specific groups that need learning in this way.

The regeneration and renewal module of **creating:excellence** ordered a study from the UWE and Cornwall Business School ('Towards a South West Regeneration and Renewal Learning Strategy', September 2003), which suggested that different groups mixing and swapping ideas would not be enough and that **creating: excellence** must go much further. They decided the following.

- The South West has relatively little experience in regeneration compared with other regions as a result of a lack of work in that area. This means that there are problems with understanding what 'regeneration' and 'renewal' mean and difficulties in career progression within the region.
- There is now a significant number of people involved in regeneration and renewal, with very different skills levels and learning needs.
- Available training is very limited, with cost and other barriers to conference- and seminar-based learning. Most formal training focused on very specific skills, resulting in an over-emphasis on learning from experience. There is also an over-emphasis on project delivery skills.
- There is a gap between community-focused work for local people and college-based training.

The full list of recommendations is highly relevant to this plan, so you should read the list and plan together. The full report will be available on the **creating:excellence** website as soon as it is available.

The architecture and the built environment module of **creating:excellence** have linked up with the national-level skills initiatives (Constructing Excellence) and professional organisations (Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and so on). There is a lot of activity in this area, so the group have decided to focus on identifying and taking action on gaps. As a result, they have asked De Facto to set up a select committee of experts who will look at evidence of skills and learning gaps and opportunities. This will take place during the spring of 2004.

While developing the business plan, consultation revealed a strong preference for peer-to-peer exchange as a way of learning. Although this may be very useful as part of CPD (particularly setting standards to compare projects), it is not enough.

We agree with the UWE report that **creating:excellence** needs to:

- improve the learning culture for organisations and individuals, making sure they know what learning opportunities are available and developing those further in partnership with existing providers;
- help make sure that regeneration and sustainability are an important part of existing courses and programmes, including CPD programmes;
- create distance-learning opportunities (making full use of the website), supported by other support for individuals such as mentoring and technical advice;
- support peer-to-peer exchange through learning groups, staff temporarily transferring to other organisations, exchanges, study tours and so on; and
- improve and publicise access to traditional courses and events, allowing them to develop and expand where necessary.

These activities and more set down in the UWE and Cornwall Business School report make up most of the work for creating excellence and mean that considerable resources are needed. We cannot secure these resources through partners' work alone.

The report proposes setting up a learning network, including sub-regional access to **creating:excellence** learning resources, web-based learning, and a learning group and staff to support these. We agree, but consider that the sub-regional structure, website and staff should be a part of the other functions of **creating:excellence**.

The learning network will be delivered through the Regeneration South West Network, which was launched by **creating:excellence** in May 2003. The term 'learning network' is also used by the business plan prepared for the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative. We discuss development of the learning network in section 5 on organisation and management.

Learning from sources outside the region

Practitioners in the South West recognise that they can learn lessons from good and bad practice in other parts of the United Kingdom and from Europe and the USA.

creating:excellence should not work alone, but should create learning opportunities by drawing on experience elsewhere. The South West region already acts as co-ordinator for the national network of regeneration centres of excellence, which brings together the nine regions and the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit to examine common approaches and problems.

creating:excellence is in a good position to arrange exchange visits between the regions for practitioners who want to learn from other projects and to showcase South West projects.

This exchange should not be limited to the UK. There are examples of good regeneration projects across Europe and in the USA. One way for **creating:excellence** to extend this learning experience is by building a network of national and international contacts, and by exchanging experiences and arranging visits and staff transfers. This suggestion is forming the basis of ideas centred on a bid for Interreg III funding.

Quality

It takes hard work and dedication to be excellent. However, people will often feel that they do not have time to go that extra mile, so we need to work smarter rather than just harder. Many people at the **creating:excellence** road shows said that "the best was the enemy of the good", in that we often ignore good practice when trying to achieve best practice.

They also opposed formal accreditation as possibly wasting time that could be better spent in learning from experience. This became a dilemma – how can you raise standards where traditional professional processes for doing so are rejected by those involved in regeneration?

One solution is to try and change the culture that opposes formal learning and introduce new methods of passing on learning. That is the proposal under the Regeneration South West Network – the 'learning network'.

But how do we know when good is good enough? Some other tested processes for raising quality are:

- benchmarking and competition;
- awards; and
- review panels.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking means measuring our success and achievements against standards that other regions have already set. We can do this through contacts with similar projects at any stage from concept to design, to putting projects into practice and evaluating them. We could introduce benchmarking through mentoring, networking or conditions of funding. **creating:excellence** needs to establish itself in the South West as a normal part of regeneration at all stages.

Unlike other parts of the country, areas in the South West are rarely competing closely and comparing practice and achievement. This means that people have to travel a long way to find other people they can compare themselves against. They often feel that their area is unique and that examples from far away might not be relevant. However, this is rarely the case and some lessons can normally be learnt from any project that has similar objectives, even if the lessons are only a warning of how not to do something.

National and international benchmarking is essential. Currently there is no process to encourage or help regeneration and renewal. Posting examples of best practice on the website does not help practitioners and community groups

to find them easily. **creating:excellence** will have a leading role in filtering information and finding ways of passing it on effectively. They will need to carry out or help processes that:

- identify examples of good and bad practice;
- make sure that people are aware of the ones that are relevant to them; and
- encourage debate about what does and does not work and how it could be improved.

creating:excellence is also a member of the National Regional Centres of Excellence Network. At the moment, it helps to co-ordinate the network so that ideas and practice can be shared. Through this and other national networks, examples of projects from around the country, and eventually also from Europe and the rest of the world, will be made available through the Regeneration South West Network and **creating:excellence** websites.

Measuring and rewarding quality

One system for raising standards and publicising good examples is to single out successful projects and organisations for awards. Award ceremonies can also help the people and organisations who attend to make contacts. The British Urban Regeneration Association has used this process for some time and combines the presentation of awards with an annual dinner for association members. The Royal Institute of British Architects, Royal Town Planning Institute and other organisations have similar schemes.

People are generally willing to put time in explaining their project (providing photographs and information, organising visits and so on) because they are aware of the rewards of good publicity. Award schemes automatically provide a source of case studies that can be shared.

Although we recognise that awards and award ceremonies are a good way of raising awareness, the steering group does not favour **creating:excellence** promoting awards. The group believes that we can learn more from 'how not to do things' and mistakes, and these issues are rarely a feature of awards. The group has decided that a more appropriate role for **creating:excellence** would be to showcase and celebrate projects from the South West that had been successful in winning awards through its own events, website and newsletters.

Review panels

The Architecture Planning and Built Environment module have proposed using regional (and possibly sub-regional) design review panels which would be supported by a network of architecture centres. There could also be a mobile service for rural areas. Under this scheme, experts are paid to sit together as a panel and read and review applications for the built environment. They will then give their views on the design, its suitability for purpose, its quality for regeneration and sustainability, and how it might be improved. A positive discussion might be seen as confirmation of good design and the equivalent of an award – a more negative view might be seen as an opportunity to avoid

making a bad mistake. The credibility of panel members and the efficiency of the system (so that it makes the planning approval process easier rather than extending it) need to be identified.

Information and advice

Signposting and filtering information

An internet search on any topic will turn up thousands of references that will keep anyone who enjoys research happy for a very long time. But most people do not have the time to wade through many references, most of which would not be suitable for their purpose.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit has found evidence that people applying for regeneration funds have rarely supported their bids with good evidence and the likely success of the solution to the problem they have identified. This is not good enough. The clichés that we all “stand on the shoulders of giants” and “there is no point in reinventing the wheel” are still true. We can all save a lot of time and resources by using the information that is already out there.

Collecting relevant information is, of course, a learning experience. By trying to solve problems of social exclusion and poverty, and environmental problems, we gain knowledge and learning. **creating:excellence** can take advantage of the problem-solving process to share good information and learning.

To do so, **creating:excellence** must filter the information and make sure that it is up to date and relevant to needs. It cannot achieve this by using their own paid staff – it will need the expertise of people in the South West working in regeneration to identify and contribute to this pool of knowledge.

An advisory service will be an important part of the delivery. We will maintain the Freephone number (0800 328 3234), which will soon be operated by **creating:excellence** staff. This is a demanding task – the organisational arrangements propose that co-ordinators will provide advice depending on what advice someone is asking for.

Providing examples of bad and good practice

One of the most useful types of information is practical examples of what has and hasn't worked. **creating:excellence** will need to collect and share examples of good and bad practice in regeneration and renewal. It can do this by:

- asking people to contribute cases;
- collecting and assessing evaluations carried out on regeneration projects in the region; and
- signposting to national or international databases of case studies.

Other methods of creating and signposting case studies include:

ordering research in areas of special interest and publicising the results;

organising events; and

organising talks from those involved in successful projects.

creating:excellence has already organised talks as part of the launch of the Regeneration South West Network in May 2003. Consultation showed that people would also like to hear about less successful approaches so that they could learn from them.

Regeneration South West Network

The Regeneration South West Network is an important part of the South West Regeneration Centre, **creating:excellence**. The initiative (the first phase of development which has been funded by the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit through the Learning Curve Programme) is designed to make it easier for people working in the fields of regeneration, renewal and social inclusion to share experience, learn from each other and find out what is going on in the region.

The vision of the network is to achieve more effective, long-term and co-ordinated action to improve neighbourhoods and the quality of life for communities in the South West.

The purpose of the network is to:

provide a **learning network** for everyone involved in regeneration, renewal and social exclusion;

help people and organisations share experience and information; and

improve access to useful information.

The network provides opportunities for everyone to find out who has relevant experience, expertise and information and then to connect and communicate with them. To help the network to grow, **creating:excellence** intends to:

offer a series of networking events;

publish 'Network News' every three months and a series of good-practice briefings; and

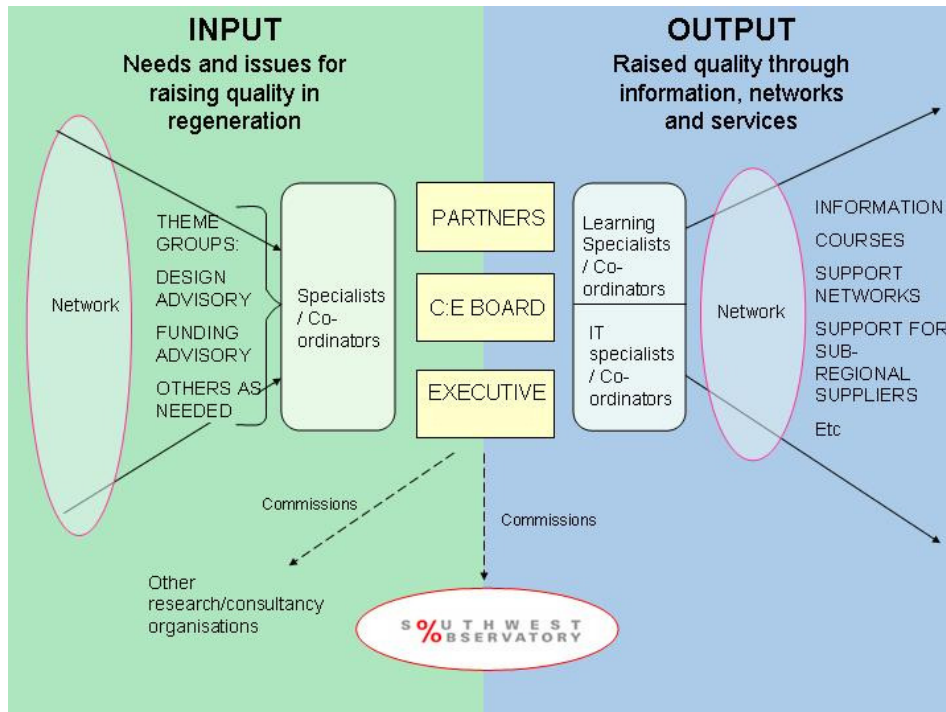
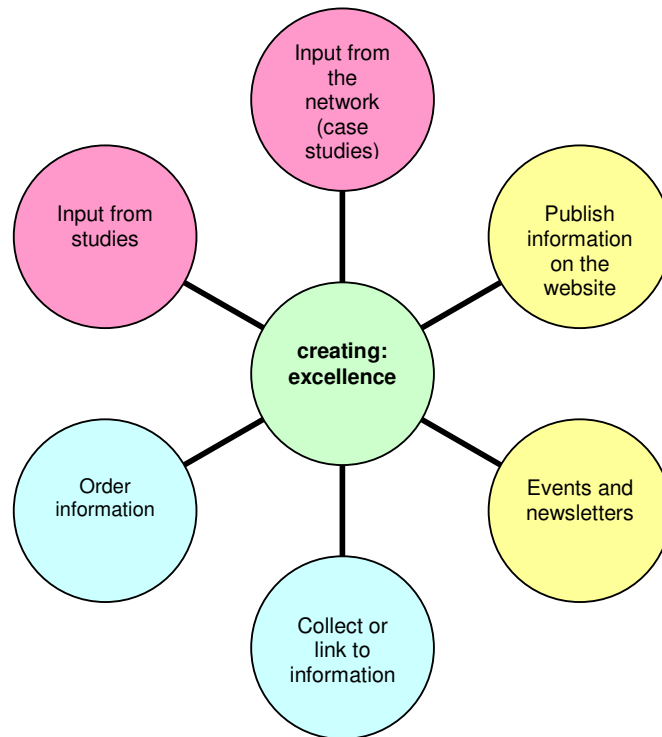
develop a regional database of contacts.

See the website for more details.

www.regenerationsouthwest.net

Communications strategy

creating:excellence can provide communities and regeneration practitioners with relevant information and propose effective solutions to their problems. It must collect this information from a very wide range of sources and share it with as many people as possible. This process is shown in the diagrams below.



Unless **creating:excellence** remains a small organisation, it cannot carry out this role. On the other hand, if it is not able to involve a wide range of users and the institutions and networks that are already in place, it cannot carry out its role. This has influenced the design of the organisation – a small core organisation with very strong and effective links with the sub-regions and existing networks of relationships.

Links with the Observatory

The South West Observatory was set up to make sure that the South West region had access to good information about the region. It has modules related to skills and learning, business and the economy, public health, regional planning and the environment. Over the last two to three years, it has been developing its regional intelligence network and now forms an effective link between local intelligence (such as local intelligence networks involving local authority research and intelligence services), analysts in South West universities and national databases such as the national statistics service. The quality of the information and how professional it is, as well as how accessible it is, is important.

This information is of great use to people trying to regenerate the region. **creating:excellence** can carry out a vital role in making sure that the information the South West Observatory and its partners collect and analyse is relevant to regeneration and renewal and is presented in a format and at a time that suits regeneration practitioners.

The role of the websites

The internet is an extraordinarily powerful source of information and communication. As a result, all the modules have proposed and, in some cases, set up websites. A domain name has already been registered, and currently is linked through our website. The business plan provides for further development of the website over the next year, and the steering group has set up a task group to monitor how the website and supporting databases are developed, including the role the Regeneration South West Network website will play. You can find the **creating:excellence** website at:

www.creatingexcellence.org.uk

Access to information on and off the internet

Not all people and organisations have access to the internet. It is part of government and regional policy to make sure that, eventually, everyone has access and has the skill to use it. For example, the Government has recently announced an initiative to set up nine regional 'Aggregation Centres' to:

pull together demand from public organisations;

achieve access to the internet; and

share the supply cost-effectively.

Communities will benefit from access to the internet, which will help to reduce social and economic exclusion. Until this happens, **creating:excellence** will have to make sure that those with poor or no access to the internet will still have the opportunity to use its services. **creating:excellence** will also need to promote access to the internet and an understanding of its advantages and limits as part of the general skills of regeneration and renewal.

Making links through the internet

One of the most significant advantages of the internet is its ability to make links. This allows knowledge to be accessed from many directions, without repeating the basic information. **creating:excellence** needs to make full use of this ability to achieve its purpose. The possible links **creating:excellence** will need to make include links to and between:

- national and international websites with up-to-date, relevant policy documents, information (for example, neighbourhood statistics and the South West Observatory) and examples of practice (for example, www.renewal.net);
- regional policy documents, action plans, information and research studies;
- regional consultation exercises, making sure that more people are involved in developing policies and planning action;
- sub-regional and local sites offering services or sharing relevant information; and
- commercial organisations offering services and information.

These links need to be structured so that users will always be able to find the most useful information.

Developing the work programme (see also section 6)

The work of the **creating:excellence** modules has shown that regeneration and renewal skills do not simply divide into the general and the specialist. The learning model that **creating:excellence** uses has to realise that as well as general and specialist skills, there is a need for individuals, organisations and groups of people to gain knowledge and understanding of areas related to their own areas. This need has already led to networks and strategies that cover specialist areas (for example, the Cultural Strategy, the Regional Environment Strategy, and the Regional Employment and Skills Strategy [Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action]).

It is important that **creating:excellence** activities recognise the value of different groups of skills. They encourage people to work in a practical but different way. The modules show that **creating:excellence** is already doing this by tackling the specific issues of architecture, planning and the built environment, funding, partnership, and regeneration and renewal. The initial plans of the modules form the basis of the **creating:excellence** business plan.

Databases

Using what is already there is an important principle of **creating:excellence**. As a result, links are very important. As well as creating links to websites, **creating:excellence** can put people in touch with one another.

We expect **creating:excellence** to reach thousands of people within the region. Finding your way to the right people is almost as difficult a task as finding your way around the database of information on regeneration and renewal. However, it is made easier by the way people tend to come together naturally into organisations and networks of common interest. The links between these need to be designed carefully to work well for users, making this another really important function for **creating:excellence**.

One or more websites

A number of people who took part in our consultation meetings in summer 2003 suggested that there should be more than one website to allow users to enter the website that suits them. There is no reason why this should not be achieved as long as branding is considered and that many websites makes access easier rather than creating confusion. If we decide to use many websites, we propose to use the same branding (see section 5).

There are already three websites associated with **creating:excellence** as follows.

Creatingexcellence.org.uk	The main site for creating:excellence providing information, links and downloads
Regenerationsouthwest.net	The network site developed by the South West Forum and Black South West Network on behalf of Government Office South West.
Fundingnews.co.uk	A website run by the Education Department of Devon County Council. It features the CERF Development Plan and consultation and links to the draft business plan.

Design South West

The group of interest represented by the architecture, planning and the built environment module has developed as Design South West. There are a number of professions and interests involved in influencing the design of the built environment. There is a strong desire to improve design quality. To do this, we propose the brand 'Design South West' as the starting point for a number of actions (which are described in later sections on the Work Programme).

People who are concerned about design will relate most effectively to the brand 'Design South West'. Under that brand, they are most likely to meet with others in related activities who they want to influence. As a result, Design South West needs to be an identifiable subgroup of **creating:excellence** without preventing members from taking part in the wider initiative where appropriate. The structure needs to take this into account.

The business plan helps to deliver a Design South West strategy by partly funding the proposed design review panels, a design select committee and other actions being researched by De Facto. Web-based learning, learning development and networking in this field will be a part of the rest of **creating:excellence**.

Funding module

Similarly, those concerned with funding have identified the need to work together to make the relationship between delivering regeneration and renewal programmes and funding sources work better. As a result, the funding module have proposed setting up Creating Excellence in Regional Funding (CERF) whose purpose is to:

“Improve delivery of funding and funding advice to communities so that they can carry out their plans for regeneration, development and renewal.”

This is targeted at communities. The function of the centre of excellence is to improve the link between those communities and sources of funding. The phone survey carried out by MSS suggests that 19% of those contacted were concerned about funding and would aim to get advice from the centre of excellence in that area.

Within the CERF Development Plan (you can find the full text at www.fundingnews.co.uk), there is emphasis on creating effective systems to link those with shared interests to achieve excellent outcomes for the region. These links move between funders, funding advisors and development workers, people applying for funds, national and international initiatives and good practice, and the Regional Observatory. **creating:excellence** will handle some, but not all, of these links.

Partnership

The partnership module have produced a draft development project. The project has the following two aims.

- To carry out specific activities which will benefit existing partnerships and the individuals and organisations involved in them.
- To develop and produce a proposal for a new regional initiative that will promote, develop and support best practice in partnership working in the South West.

It is an action research project, and information taken as part of the research will benefit the people involved (for example, mapping for existing and planned partnerships will be made available and easily accessible – so promoting networking and sharing information between partnerships).

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and the organisations and agencies involved in them will be some of the main people to benefit from the project. The development of LSPs varies within the South West, but there appears to be a common need for help and support with developing them.

The project will deliver a series of specific outcomes. These include:

- a web and paper directory or database (or both) of existing and emerging partnerships in the South West;
- a web and paper directory or database (or both) of existing and planned resources and services which support partnership work, including guides, toolkits, training, consultancy and specialist support services;
- networking and training events at regional or sub-regional level (or both); and
- a networking and personal support function through the project workers. In other words, real people who can provide personal and, where necessary, face-to-face advice at no cost. Part of their role would be to direct people to other partnerships and sources of support and act as a link between those who could help and support each other.

As well as the practical services and activities described above, there will be two main developmental outcomes from the project.

- An analysis of the skills, knowledge and support needs of partnerships and the gaps in partnership support and development in the region. This will make full use of the initial assessments, based on focus groups, arising from the study on neighbourhood renewal skills and knowledge.
- A plan for a new regional partnership development initiative. This plan will have support from many sectors and approval from the main regional agencies and networks and a significant number of regeneration and renewal partnerships in the region. The plan will include an appraisal of different delivery options.

Regeneration and renewal

The regeneration and renewal action plan has three main projects.

- Set up the Regeneration South West Network.
- A regional study on demand and supply of skills and knowledge in regeneration and renewal.
- The regional network of regeneration, renewal and social exclusion learning programmes.

We described the first project earlier in this section, which was launched at an event we held in Wellington on 15 May (which around 75 people came to). The website is up and running and we have also published the first newsletter.

We have also described the second project at the start of this section. The study 'Towards a South West Regeneration and Renewal Learning Strategy' has been ordered by the Government Office for the South West on behalf of **creating:excellence** from the University of the West of England (UWE) and Cornwall Business School (CBS).

The executive summary of this study was available to help shape this business plan. The full report will not be available until the spring of 2004 and will need to be considered then, together with recommendations on the content of the learning programmes, which make up the third project area. We have already organised a number of Neighbourhood Renewal Unit-sponsored events as part of a learning programme.

Action plans

We have looked at the purpose of **creating:excellence** overall, the desired activities that flow from its purpose and from consultation, and the studies and action, development and project plans ordered by the modules or **creating:excellence** steering group.

Mapping these together, we find some areas that overlap – for example, the desire to:

set up contact and learning networks, project databases, and links between different interests;

set up a web-based information exchange; and

organise events.

There are gaps, especially in dealing with the issue of how we raise quality other than by learning from experience.

Design South West aims to deal with the quality issue in its proposals by different methods, for example, by setting up design review panels that add expertise to the process.

Overall, we consider that further development work needs to be done on issues of quality, benchmarking, competition and accreditation. We recommend that this is tackled by **creating:excellence** in the future.

Other action developed through the work of the modules is included in the work programme described in section 6.

This discussion of activities allows us to propose an organisation that is designed to deliver them. We deal with this in the next section.

Organisation and management

In this section we discuss:

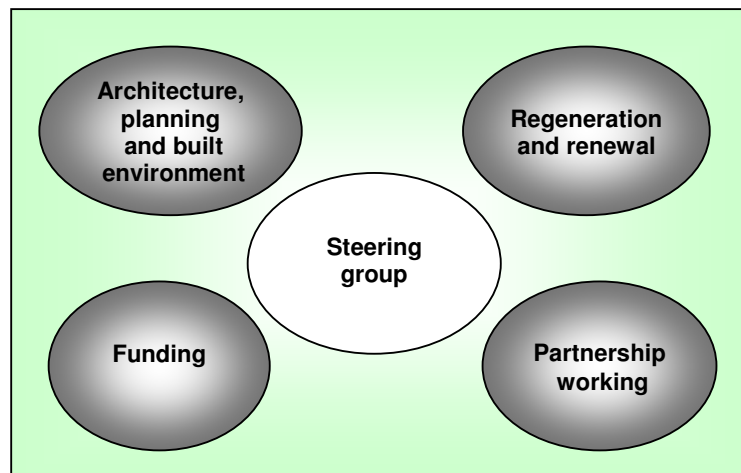
- current management arrangements;
- networking in the region;
- a structure to deliver the identified purpose and activities;
- options for the legal structure; and
- summary recommendations on organisation and management.

Current management arrangements

creating:excellence has developed without an agreed plan, but instead is fuelled by people's goodwill and energy. Initially, the driving force was provided by a steering group of partners. Following the original work by the UWE and the first conference to discuss the future of **creating:excellence**, four working groups or 'modules' were set up based around:

- regional funding (CERF);
- partnership working (PW);
- regeneration and renewal (R and R); and
- architecture, planning and the built environment (APBE).

The relationship is shown in the following diagram.



The administration for these groups has been provided by partners (for example, we provide the administration for the architecture and the built environment module). In January 2003, we appointed a development manager for the whole centre, Dominic Murphy, for 18 months to monitor the development stage. Apart from a temporary assistant, Dominic is still the only **creating:excellence** member of staff.

Some members of the steering group also sit on the working groups, including the chairs of the working groups. This has made sure that the modules and the steering group are able to communicate.

We gave each working group a budget for 2003/2004, and each has developed short-term proposals as action, development or project plans, defining how those amounts would be spent and with what desired outcome. We did not ask the working groups to affect the eventual outcome of the business planning process, but to contribute to some 'early wins' and make sure the South West Centre of Excellence progressed and was effective. Both the steering group and the working groups have arranged consultancies and contracts which combine developmental work and setting up services.

The plans developed by the module working groups reflected similar thinking in the ways of providing services and involving users and providers. All identified the need to improve opportunities for learning and skills development. Similarly, all identified the need for contact databases, websites and events. As a result, we have considered the need for a more linked structure.

Networking in the region

There is a large number of theme-based networks operating at regional, subregional and local level throughout the South West. One of the modules - architecture, planning and the built environment - includes a number of related specialist professional areas and encourages new ideas to be developed and shared between them. This is a similar structure to other theme-based groups and networks that exist outside **creating:excellence** (for example, Sustainability South West, Culture South West, the Learning and Skills Council group, the Regional Environmental Network, the Sustainable Construction Network, South West Law Society and so on).

They carry out one important role simply by giving information to members. However, the **creating:excellence** managers do not need to have close control over these groups - only to provide support (financial or in kind), accreditation and branding where necessary. They should not form the core of the management arrangements for **creating:excellence**.

The regeneration and renewal group can also be classed as a 'theme' group, but it is so wide that it covers all of **creating:excellence**'s concerns. One option would be to reform the group to cover specifically 'community regeneration'. However, as all regeneration is concerned with communities, we do not recommend this option as it might prevent deprived communities from playing a fuller role in society. We have argued that the steering group and regeneration and renewal group are so close in purpose that they should be merged.

A structure to deliver the identified purpose and activities

The Regeneration South West Network

Networking is important for **creating:excellence**. The principles agreed for **creating:excellence** mean that the network is very wide and includes as many organisations as possible. For it to have members and work well, it needs to be an organisation that is easy to get involved in.

The regeneration and renewal module of **creating:excellence** have already launched the Regeneration South West Network, the process by which all those who want to commit themselves to the ideals of **creating:excellence** will be able to join in by registering and making their interests and connections known.

The network has several functions.

- Identifying the target audience for **creating:excellence** through registration, allowing this audience to receive information on learning opportunities, and receive information and intelligence.
- Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of skilled people in the region.
- Creating new communities of interest based on geography, aspect of regeneration, stage of regeneration, learning need or other interest.
- Generating events, publications and web links.
- Creating links between people and organisations – a brokering service.
- Being the resource from which and to which all information flows and ideas circulate.

The Regeneration South West Network will act to bring together networks – as a network of networks – and will also include those involved in regeneration without belonging to any other network. Over time, people joining the Regeneration South West Network should be drawn into other networks that are dedicated to particular aspects of regeneration.

A partnership forum

The network is essential to the success of **creating:excellence**, but needs a system to discuss important issues and new priorities for **creating:excellence**.

We have suggested setting up a partnership forum to represent users of **creating:excellence** by taking members from existing networks such as South West Forum and Sustainability South West, together with stakeholders who are responsible for funding or delivering services for **creating:excellence**.

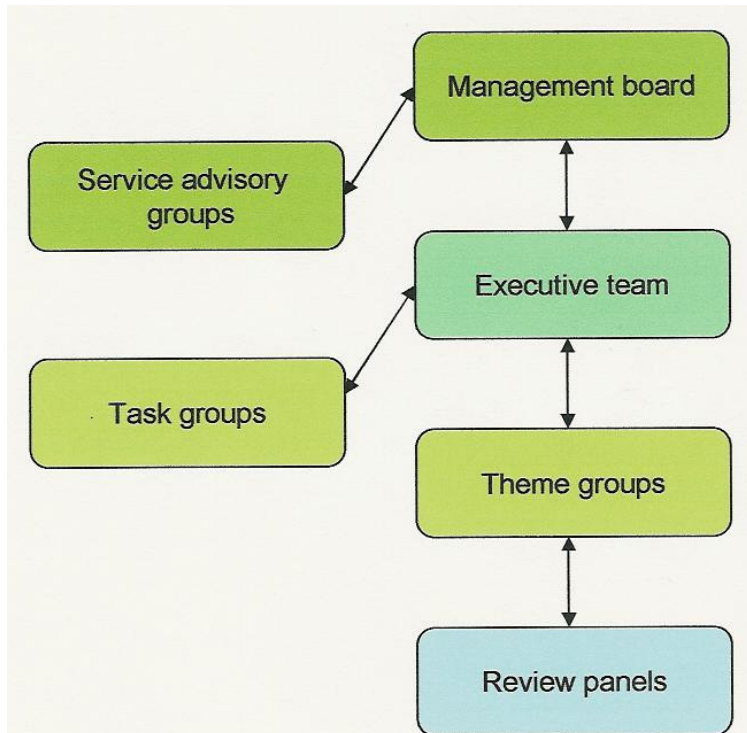
This would be a wide group – perhaps 50 members or more – but we felt they would make sure that **creating:excellence** stays on track, keeps up to date with current concerns, and responds to the needs of network members.

A partnership forum would be separate from the Regeneration South West Network in that its members would be organisations or network representatives, rather than the 2000 or more people who will make up the network.

However, after discussing the idea, the steering group considered that the Regeneration South West Network could make sure that **creating:excellence** answers to its users (as demanded in the consultation road shows) by holding a conference each year.

As a result, we have revised the organisational arrangements to leave out the proposed regional partnership forum. The structure we now propose is shown in the diagram below. The reasons and roles for each part of the structure follow.

creating:excellence organisational structure



The administrative and managing centre of creating:excellence

The network will only help to share information. The structure below is designed for **creating:excellence** to carry out learning, research and intelligence functions, and raise quality.

We plan a 'hub and spoke' model. The hub (of paid staff) will be located in one building. The spokes will be a sub-regional structure, any part of which can carry out a key function. There may be more than one spoke in a sub-region, and we will encourage the spokes to carry out different functions by providing modest support.

At the heart of **creating:excellence** will be the main centre that co-ordinates the activity of the network. This has been supported by stakeholders and in the consultation that has taken place.

Management board

The management board will carry out the functions of leadership, co-ordination, staff recruitment and management, financial management and accountability. So far the current steering group has carried out this role. Its membership is now changing to take account of the move from development to operation. We discuss legal models on pages 41 to 43.

creating:excellence has a substantial agenda and is relatively early in its development. As a result, the board should meet every month at this stage. An important task will be to deal with the issue of quality and accreditation (see section 4). This area is important to **creating:excellence**'s function and creates the most controversy. There may be a period of overlap, with a shadow board taking over from the steering group as the formal way of delivering services is developed.

Executive team

creating:excellence needs an executive to carry out day-to-day tasks, co-ordinate activity and drive towards achieving the objectives of the organisation. The executive team will report to the board.

An executive director will head the paid staff. He or she will:

go to board meetings;

report progress;

raise issues that are appropriate for the board to deal with; and

make sure that those issues are communicated more widely – to the network and to the staff – and are carried out.

This will be a demanding task and should be paid to reflect its importance in the region.

The staff structure will reflect the important functions of the centre, located together in a central hub. Its main staff of eight people will include:

- an executive director, responsible to the management board;
- a learning co-ordinator, as recommended by UWE;
- a design co-ordinator, as recognised by APBE;
- a funding co-ordinator, as recognised by CERF;
- a web co-ordinator, to make sure that information is structured and shared in ways which meet the needs of the network;

- a communications and marketing officer;
- a research and intelligence officer; and
- an administrative assistant.

Subregional outlets of creating:excellence (spokes)

In response to the consultation on the business plan, we propose that **creating:excellence** should create sub-regional outlets for services. These will not be new, independent organisations, but will be existing 'host' organisations. These organisations may be centres of excellence in their field in their own right, or they may be multi-purpose organisations serving local communities. People will be able to use these centres as points of access to learning and information on regeneration, and as networking centres where they can work with others on regeneration and renewal. To become a **creating:excellence** host organisation, organisations will have to be prepared to:

- have open access to that part of the building hosting **creating:excellence** (that is, it should not need high security);
- be accessible to as many practitioners as possible (for example, be located in a town centre);
- provide space for a dedicated computer terminal and possibly physical library resources;
- provide other 'welcoming' services that will involve network members (for example, a coffee machine, a photocopier and information on regeneration events and courses);
- host learning events such as seminars and conferences;
- provide staff time to give advice to **creating:excellence** network members; and
- possibly host **creating:excellence** staff who are carrying out particular functions.

There may be one or more host organisations in a sub-region, depending on the enthusiasm of local organisations and the population served.

creating:excellence will provide some funding towards these services and activities and entirely fund any **creating:excellence** staff who work elsewhere.

Service advisory groups

The previous section of the business plan decided that **creating:excellence's** services need to be structured around the different needs of possible users. Regeneration practitioners approach their subject from many starting points - as residents, people living in a residential community concerned with environmental, design and social issues, as developers looking for an opportunity, as public-sector agents trying to improve design and delivery, and

as professionals and academics sharing in-depth, specialist knowledge. How can we structure **creating:excellence** to respond to these needs?

To some extent, relevant services will already be provided by members of the network so all **creating:excellence** needs to do is to publicise them. However, **creating:excellence** has already identified gaps in services that are holding back regeneration and renewal in the region.

creating:excellence already has two groups focused around two of the most important requirements for successful regeneration – partnership and funding.

Partnership is a culture, but it is also a set of skills that can be taught. For example, we include improvements to regional partnership as one of our objectives in the Regional Economic Strategy. We have also set ourselves the task of encouraging partnership in a number of ways.

- Through funding the setting up of regeneration partnerships through initiatives such as Market and Coastal Towns, Rural Renaissance and Building Communities.
- Funding economic aspects of partnership-based regeneration programmes.
- Setting up and contributing to sub-regional partnerships (for example, the seven sub-regional economic partnerships and regional partnerships, such as Sustainability South West).

Local government also has a major leadership role in developing partnership in the South West, through individual authorities and through the Regional Assembly. They have responsibilities – for example, for community strategies and providing the leadership for Local Strategic Partnerships.

These formal structures, which include the system of ward councillors and democratic election, are supported by local community structures based on groups of interest. These include communities of interest based on residency (residents' and tenants' associations), leisure and work interest (clubs and trade unions), religion, political concerns (Friends of the Earth and the Countryside Alliance) and organisations working with socially-excluded groups (Shelter, Racial Equality Councils and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders). Local community structures may or may not be part of a national structure.

The role of **creating:excellence** is to make sure that these partnerships have the skills, connections and understanding. This is an important and continuing function of **creating:excellence**, but it does not need a service group.

As a result, we propose to break up the partnership group and involve its members in other parts of the **creating:excellence** structure.

CERF have proposed the appointment of a funding development manager and the supply of technical funding advice and signposting for those applying for funding through the Funders' Forum, and to bring together those involved in providing funding advice as well as those involved in providing the funding. We

agree with these proposals, but as with the UWE and CBS proposals for a 'learning network', we propose that staff should be a part of **creating:excellence**.

We propose the setting up of two service groups, whose members could be taken from the existing modules or wider. The groups are a **learning advisory group** to advise on running the Regeneration South West Network as a 'learning network' and an **information and advice group** to identify, interpret and share information and advice.

Learning advisory group

The learning advisory group will link to existing networks concerned with learning and skills. In particular, there is a relationship with the Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action and a need to develop a relationship between **creating:excellence** and the Regional Employment Forum.

We propose that the learning advisory group should provide an update every two years to the Regional Employment Forum on learning policy development and delivery issues in relation to regeneration and renewal. This would fit with the proposals in the National Skills Strategy White Paper on Regional Skills Partnerships, which are based on FRESA developments.

The benefit of this approach will be to make sure that strategic funders of learning and skills formally hear about issues in regeneration and renewal, and those that will emerge from Sir John Egan's review will be highly relevant.

Information and advice group

This group would provide advice to the **creating:excellence** board and executive on collecting or presenting information. Proposed studies to fill gaps in information would be considered by the group, whose make-up would allow for constructive comment on whether that information already existed (although hard to find or in an unfriendly format), practical considerations relating to buying in goods and services, and advice on how best to share information. This means that the **creating:excellence** websites and newsletters would need to be monitored and checked for quality.

The group would also have a role in advising on the advisory service provided by **creating:excellence**, either through the Freephone service or through brokered services (for example, mentors or specialist advisors).

Task groups

creating:excellence will continue to generate short-term tasks that need a group of people with a clear brief to deliver a fixed output in a fixed timescale. Normally, specialist skills are needed to achieve this. For example, developing databases and websites needs an understanding of database and web design issues. The members of task groups can be taken from anywhere in the **creating:excellence** network. Size will vary depending on the task being covered. Tasks already identified include database and web development, and Interreg III bid.

We recommend that **creating:excellence** continues to draw together specialists from across the region to make sure that these tasks are done well. The groups will break up once the task is complete. This maintains the strength of **creating:excellence**, which alters quickly to carry out specific functions and uses the whole resources of the region, as necessary. It is a good example for others.

Theme networks

Two of the module groups were based around specific themes – architecture, planning and the built environment, and funding.

Design South West (DSW)

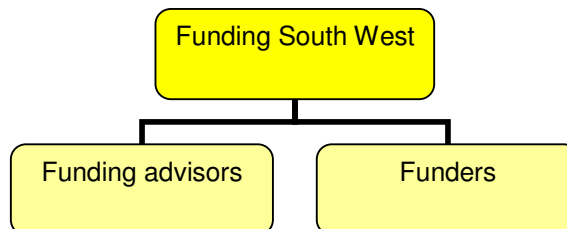
We recommend that the APBE module should be called Design South West. This will operate as a separate network, supported by **creating:excellence** in the form of a co-ordinator post, and with funding for setting up the proposed design review panel. DSW will work closely with the Bristol Architecture Centre and the proposed Architecture Centre for Plymouth, and are currently preparing a bid for CABE funding to support proposals emerging from the work of De Facto. A design brochure is planned for release in February 2004.

Funding South West

This is a new group proposed by this plan which does not yet exist. However, certain elements do exist, and the need for better information and access to funding advice has already been identified by CERF and dealt with in their development plan.

We see Funding South West as another network (similar to DSW as outlined above) but with two separate parts, as shown in the diagram on the next page.

Proposed Fundina South West Network structure



The current members of CERF include a mix of funding representatives, funding advisors (mostly statutory and voluntary sector), and voluntary and community organisations.

We can gain much from the major funders in the region meeting together to share common concerns (for example, application and appraisal procedures, and measuring outputs). These would include representatives from the Regional Development Agency (RDA) and Government Office for the South West (GOSW) who do not go to Creating Excellence in Regional Funding (CERF) meetings at the moment. Other funders such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) and

the European funding providers would have an important contribution to make. It is also important that we start discussions with some of the major private-sector investors in regeneration such as banks, pension funds and insurance companies.

At the moment there is no process for funders to get together with those applying for funding, and we see it as one of the tasks of the funding co-ordinator post within **creating:excellence** to try to change this. One way would be to bring together those funders concerned with jointly funding a project. We expect this type of arrangement to come together as a funding review panel, similar to the design review panel.

Funding advisors are scattered throughout the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors. There is no regional network which brings funding advisors together. One of the major tasks of **creating:excellence** will be to work with advisors and funders to make sure that advisors are better networked and that the quality of funding advice is of a consistently high standard. This is likely to involve us encouraging existing and future advisors to work towards an agreed, professional quality standard.

We will encourage funding advisors to register as members of the Regeneration South West Network, with the registration process identifying them as such and their areas of specialist expertise or skills. Similarly, we will encourage organisations applying for funding to use members of the Regeneration South West Network. In this way, we hope to identify a target audience or subset of the network for learning events and, if possible, to encourage the setting up of a network with which to get involved with funders.

We have secured funding to set up a Funders' Forum, which we propose to set up as a charity. There are other examples in other regions (East Midlands, Wales and so on). These Funders' Forums focus on funding to voluntary organisations.

This is clearly an important group to involve in **creating:excellence**, as voluntary and community organisations play a role in regeneration and renewal. They are not the whole picture but they are part of the bigger picture.

Again, we see a role for **creating:excellence** to bring together these groups as a network under the Funding South West banner. This will form an important part of the post we identify as funding co-ordinator.

Review panels

The APBE module have identified the setting up of a design review panel. The panel has already been set up in the South East. The panel would be made up of some professional designers (for example, architects and highway engineers) but supported by others concerned with good design (for example, artists, teachers, academics and the police).

We would encourage any proposed large-scale development to get the approval of the design review panel before applying for planning permission. We may also demand that organisations apply for public funding for the project, as currently

happens in the South East where South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA) funding is being applied for.

Due to the size of the region, we should consider sub-regions. We propose to set up one large region-wide panel, which can attract a representative pool of experts. The large panel would draw on its members to consider projects in any of the sub-regions depending on the nature of the project. We do not suggest that each sub-region should set up its own local panel, as the whole point is to bring regional expertise to the benefit of all the sub-regions.

We would use a similar approach to funding and set up a regional funding panel. The role of the panel (which would be made up of the major funding stakeholders) would be to consider projects where 'cocktail funding' was being applied for (that is, where funding from more than one public funding source was being applied to a project). Initially, this would be confirmation of eligibility and strategy before more detailed consideration and appraisal by the funders.

For example, a regional funding panel would mean that funding for major regional projects, such as the Eden Project, could be negotiated between funders and bidders. This might lead to further work and co-operation in funding at a strategic level.

However, it could also be a way of moving to a single application process – a move likely to be welcomed by those applying for funding from different funders and at the moment having to fill in a number of forms (many of which need the same information). The idea of creating a 'passport' (a process where a number of funders agree to share standards, and so can accept an approval by one as an acceptance for the others) has already been put forward as a way of overcoming much of the duplicated information. We will only ever achieve this if the regional funders are in regular contact and able to share practice and strategy.

Principles for creating:excellence groups

All groups set up under **creating:excellence** will share the following features and tasks. Supported by the paid staff, they will:

- invite people serving on existing modules to take part as appropriate, where they are willing to continue;
- meet at least every three months;
- have no allocated budget, but help identify where resources are needed from **creating:excellence** and others;
- help in providing appropriate text for the **creating:excellence** website;
- identify the networks operating in their area and make sure these are recorded through the South West Regeneration Network database;
- identify links to other related websites;
- identify and, if necessary, get relevant documents for the websites through the database library of documents;

- give advice on the need for, and help organise, events on the relevant area;
- identify project case studies to be included in the project's database;
- discuss the latest developments and best practice and make sure these are reflected through **creating:excellence**; and
- report to and advise the board on the group's activities.

Options for the legal structure

We looked at the following options for a legal structure.

- Keeping the current arrangements.
- Allocating the management of **creating:excellence** to a stakeholder partner.
- Setting up an independent, legally constituted organisation.
- Creating a partnership organisation, backed by services from a competent agent.

A common theme arising in the road shows was the need for the South West Regeneration Centre to be independent from any one partner. In particular, it was felt that the Centre should be independent from us.

An independent organisation would have a clear focus and identity, and allow regional partners and stakeholders to focus on their main business while providing them with a resource to help them review and develop policies – helping to compare, co-ordinate and develop strategic regional responses to issues around regeneration and renewal by drawing on the Centre's evidence base. The Centre itself would be independent from any one regional partner or set of interests.

However, independence comes at a price. The Centre will need dedicated funding if it is to avoid spending its time chasing the money, and its organisation still needs to reflect the various interests of regional stakeholders and partners. It would also need a full legal structure.

There are a number of tried and tested processes for setting up methods for delivering services.

- A company limited by shares
- A company limited by guarantee (with and without charitable status)
- An industrial and provident society
- A community benefit society

- A charitable trust
- A charitable incorporated organisation
- A community interest company
- There are also emerging proposals for new types of 'community' not-for-profit organisations.

As a separate legal organisation, with a secure income, **creating:excellence** would be able to enter contracts, employ staff, have its own branding and public relations and so on. However, it would also have to account for its income and spending, possibly including:

registering and accounting for VAT;

having their accounts audited; and

making appropriate arrangements for staff development, health and safety, and pensions.

From our analysis of the options, we have decided that none of the existing vehicles provides an ideal solution. We have ignored those that need primary legislation for the time being, even though they may well provide the answer in the future. The best available legal options are the company limited by guarantee (CLG) and the industrial and provident society (IPS). Both need members, which certain partner organisations feel unable to provide, preferring instead to nominate 'observers'.

We have also rejected applying for charitable status for the CLG model (the IPS comes with the ability to call itself a charity). We believe that charitable status would bring more disadvantages than advantages to **creating:excellence**, especially in the complicated arrangements with the Charity Commissioners as well as restrictions on activities, use of assets, and the personal liability of 'trustees'. The personal liability of trustees is a reason many government-sponsored agencies do not allow officers to become trustees or members of CLGs with charitable status.

Due to the limits on board membership, directorships and trusteeships, we have considered the alternative option which reflects the 'partnership' between the various agencies, and which respects the need to avoid formal boards of directors and members.

There are already other independent-branded partner organisations in the South West (for example, Sustainability South West – a company limited by guarantee but with a large board made up of directors, members and observers). Other examples, involving similar stakeholders, are the South West Observatory (SWO) and the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA). Despite strong branding and visibility, these are actually not formal legal organisations.

For both the SWO and SWRA, Somerset County Council invisibly 'hosts' them – not in the same offices, but legally and administratively. As a result, all staff appointments, pension arrangements, payroll, buying in goods and services and

accounting are done under an agency arrangement. This is not unlike the 'accountable' body arrangements for some Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) delivery organisations. **creating:excellence** could 'pay' another organisation (for example, Somerset County Council) for these agency arrangements.

Our preferred option is to recommend that **creating:excellence** is constituted as an unincorporated association, with Somerset County Council being an obvious candidate to host employment. We are currently getting legal advice on the administrative arrangements for **creating:excellence**.

creating:excellence will need to have annual audited accounts, whatever model we adopt for the structure.

We recognise that this is an untried approach for many in the public sector, with the more common method being the CLG. We do not rule out the CLG or the IPS as options. If unforeseen hurdles are identified in the legal advice, we would need to consider these two again. However, we do see real benefits from a genuine 'partnership' organisation, complete with partnership agreement so all partners agree to the principles and rules of conduct.

Summary recommendations on organisation and management

- **creating:excellence** is set up by its partners as an independent 'arm's-length' organisation with its own management board and staff.
- The preferred model for this type of organisation would be an unincorporated association, with administrative functions provided by a host organisation.
- The target audience or users of **creating:excellence** would be the Regeneration South West Network, with all those involved in regeneration and renewal and committed to learning and raising standards becoming members of the network.
- Service groups are created to support the **creating:excellence** main functions of delivering information and learning. The information and advice group will make sure that the website and other information outlets provide relevant, high-quality and up-to-date information and case studies, working with the South West Observatory for research and intelligence results. The learning advisory group also considers putting the recommendations of the UWE 'Study on Learning for Regeneration and Renewal' into practice. **creating:excellence** staff will serve these groups. The management board will deal with the other main issue of quality and accreditation.
- The APBE module is restyled as the Design South West project, branded as a separate but linked network. As part of this project, a design review panel is set up on a regional basis.
- The regeneration and renewal module is merged with the steering group to create the new management board.

- **creating:excellence** will promote the setting up of a regional funding panel and a funding advisors' network (Funding South West), similar to the proposals for Design South West. This recognises the roles played by public-sector funders (regional and local), the Regeneration South West Network subset of funding advisors, and the independent funders. **creating:excellence** will provide dedicated staff and project funding where appropriate.
- A sub-regional structure is created based in existing organisations to provide a signposting service for **creating:excellence**. This will include convenient venues for learning events, courses, networking and access to **creating:excellence** services, through phone, web or direct advice.

Resources

In this section we discuss:

- the cost of running **creating:excellence** over the period 2003 to 2006 in terms of staff, administration and services;
- funding of these costs from different sources; and
- summary recommendations on resources.

The resources we need

Staff

In the previous section we identify the directly employed people needed to deliver **creating:excellence** services. We see the need to add to staff over time as **creating:excellence** becomes established and workloads expand. Our proposed budget provides for the following staff resources over the plan period.

creating:excellence staffing needed		
Job	Recruitment	In post
Executive director	November 2003	March 2004
Learning co-ordinator	November 2003	January 2004
Design co-ordinator	January 2004	April 2004
Funding co-ordinator	January 2004	April 2004
Administrative assistant	November 2003	January 2004
Appointments in year 2		
Communications and marketing manager		July 2004
Research and intelligence officer	April 2004	May 2004
Technical ICT	March 2004	July 2004
Rural co-ordinator (mobile)	April 2004	September 2004
Satellite – part time	June 2004	2004
	January 2004	September 2004

Appointments in year 3		
Satellite – part time	January 2005	April 2005
Learning co-ordinator assistant	June 2005	September 2005

The learning co-ordinator will help us to recruit staff and manage the contracts with the South West Forum for the Regeneration South West Network and Partnership Project. We hope that a design co-ordinator and a funding co-ordinator should be in post for the start of the new financial year. We will temporarily buy in administrative services until we have recruited administrative assistants.

Appointments in year 2 include a communications and marketing manager to take over much of the work currently being handled by Grayling as our consultants for marketing and public relations. A research and intelligence officer post will bring together information, work with the South West Observatory and serve the information and advice group.

We also propose that a technical ICT post will take over the management of the websites and help to develop the websites and databases in the future. We hope to recruit a rural co-ordinator halfway through the year to add further depth to rural coverage. The post will work closely with the Marketing and Coastal Towns Initiative delivery team. We will also allow a member of staff to temporarily transfer to another organisation (this could be in a deprived area or within an urban regeneration company).

Appointments in year 3 mean we can strengthen learning and rural coverage by appointing an assistant to the learning co-ordinator and an officer to manage a mobile service. He or she could also work with existing mobile services, mainly for rural areas. We will also allow a second member of staff to temporarily transfer to another organisation part time.

The proposed budget allows for associated recruitment costs, employer's National Insurance and pension contributions, and travel and subsistence costs. We will advertise all posts in line with equal opportunities policies.

We may allow staff from other organisations to temporarily transfer to the centre to help us fill posts before we recruit our own staff formally. In particular, we may ask for support from the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) to help us develop Design South West through transfers. Similarly, the Countryside Agency may be able to provide temporary staff for rural regeneration. Graduate placements may also be appropriate to fill the positions of research and intelligence officer or the rural posts.

Administrative costs

We have set aside funds for the key staff to be based in rented accommodation from June 2004. To begin with, we will need 2000 square feet at a rent of £20 for each square foot, including service charges. Although the

creating:excellence management board will need to decide where the accommodation will be located, there may be advantages in basing our staff with staff of the South West Observatory (for example, computer support, phones and so on).

The proposed budget also assumes that we will make contributions to the operating costs of satellite operations, with two satellites set up in 2004 and a further three in the following year. A mobile service (for which we will need to buy and fit out a suitable bus or coach) is programmed as coming into operation in 2005.

We have also allowed for furniture and equipment, agency services for payroll and accounting, audit and insurances. Other administrative costs provide for consultancy support in business planning, Interreg bid and evaluation.

We expect consultancy support from outside agencies for public relations and communications to reduce as **creating:excellence** employs its own public relations and communications officer. We have also taken account of the costs of marketing and publishing newsletters and other publications. The cost of an annual conference, building on the conferences held in 2002 and 2003, is included in each coming year.

We expect to invest significantly in developing and maintaining a website. This is to make sure that the **creating:excellence** website is excellent, relevant, up to date, and able to expand as new information is needed.

We have allowed for the delivery of the Regeneration South West Network, including developing and maintaining a website with £43,000 in 2003/2004, rising to £102,000 in 2004/2005.

The network will be managed by the South West Forum under a contract with the Government Office South West until **creating:excellence** is able to do so itself. We will provide another £50,000 a year in 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 for further development of the websites.

Service and programme costs

Initial consultancy costs for studies and collecting research and information will be £145,000 in 2003/2004. This includes the studies by UWE, CBS and De Facto and preparing the business plan. The budget provides £50,000 a year for continued research in later years. The budget also allows for advisory service costs at £20,000 in 2004/2005 and £25,000 in 2005/2006.

creating:excellence will provide some learning services through network events – at least two each year in each of the sub-regions, and a regional learning event on top of the annual conference we have already mentioned.

We have provided for around £90,000 a year for promoting and sponsoring courses. This will allow **creating:excellence** to approve courses or other learning events that meet the conditions we have suggested in section 4. The budget also allows for a 'Learning Chest', which would provide grants for people to go on courses or events that they would not otherwise be able to afford.

The budget also provides for costs associated with possible accreditation and support for awards events, to encourage raising quality. The exact methods of raising quality have not been developed at this stage.

A contribution to the costs of setting up Design South West and the operating costs of its design review panel of £80,000 a year are also included, together with funding from CABE for putting into practice the programme that De Facto is developing.

The budget for learning activities is around £195,000 in 2004/2005, rising to £255,000 in 2005/2006. Much of the programme still has to be identified and will develop over time with advice from the learning advisory group.

Finally, £50,000 a year is provided to help **creating:excellence** support other projects that meet its objectives. These will become more apparent as **creating:excellence** establishes its reputation, and receives approaches for funding support for a particular need.

Service and programme spending will rise from around £200,000 now to around £500,000 in future years. The costs are summarised in the following table.

creating:excellence proposed budget 2002-2006				
	Actual	Forecast	Planned	Planned
	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Staff costs (including National Insurance, pensions, travel and expenses, and recruitment)	18,312	86,775	370,000	431,100
Premises	-	5,000	50,000	115,000
Administration costs	125	21,000	25,000	27,000
Website	47,137	33,000	152,000	80,000
Consultancies	59,772	75,000	30,000	30,000
Public relations and marketing	-	150,000	43,000	43,000
Service and programme	110,459	202,500	455,000	520,000
Total costs	235,806	573,275	1,125,300	1,246,100

Funding

So far, the main funders have been the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) of the Government Office for the South West (GOSW), and us (the South West

Regional Development Agency). We have approved around £945,000 as 'development' funding but will need to consider further funding needs in the light of this plan.

To some extent, the NRU contribution pays for the learning programmes we have been trying to secure. We assume that the NRU will continue to fund similar programmes in the future. However, we also expect a service-level agreement with **creating:excellence** to provide for some specific learning in neighbourhood renewal communities, so have provided for this at £88,000 a year.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) have also said that they may be willing to contribute to funding for all the regional centres of excellence. The plan assumes the ODPM will contribute £250,000 a year.

We also assume that we will receive funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) due to the South West being mainly rural. In particular, we are applying for support from DEFRA for the staff costs of the rural and mobile officer and the pilot mobile service for rural areas.

We also hope to receive funding from CABE and through CERF (£15,000 in 2003/2004).

We will then provide any funding that is still needed. The proposed budget recognises that not all the development funding allocated will be spent before **creating:excellence** becomes operational. We will need to approve a further £1 million of funding to take **creating:excellence** forward to the end of 2005/2006. We will then review the position.

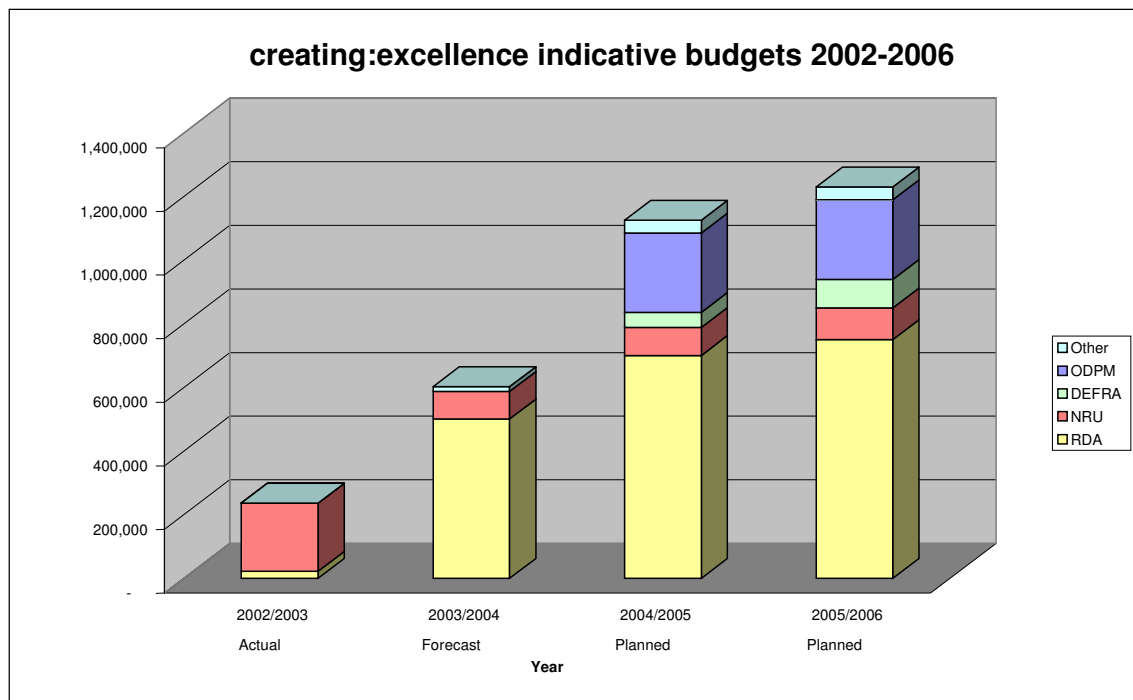
The proposed funding does not assume how much income **creating:excellence** could generate itself. This is deliberate to avoid making **creating:excellence** dependent on activities that may generate an income.

However, we expect that **creating:excellence** will generate some income from charges for its own events, selling publications, and potential evaluation services. For example, **creating:excellence** could carry out evaluations for us after projects have ended under a separate service-level agreement, although this may mean that they are then in competition with us. We expect **creating:excellence** to reinvest any extra funds it is able to raise from fees and charges as a way of improving its services.

Similarly, although **creating:excellence** may be successful in securing Interreg III funding, we have not taken this into account as a source of funding as **creating:excellence** would only receive it if it also received support from the UK Government. **creating:excellence** would need to run up costs to provide the international links needed for an Interreg bid (for example, website extensions, exchange visits, translations and so on). Any funding would be used to expand the main services to the network.

The funding implications are shown in the following table and graph.

creating:excellence proposed budget funding 2002-2006				
	Actual 2002/2003	Forecast 2003/2004	Planned 2004/2005	Planned 2005/2006
Costs to be funded	235,806	573,275	1,125,300	1,246,100
Funding				
RDA	21,488	500,000	700,000	750,000
NRU	214,317	87,000	88,000	100,000
DEFRA	-	-	47,050	89,100
ODPM	-	-	250,000	250,000
Other – CERF or CABE	-	15,000	40,000	40,000
Funding	235,806	602,000	1,125,050	1,229,100
Surplus/(deficit)	-	- 28,275	250	17,000
Total working capital	-	- 28,275	- 28,475	- 11,475



The assumed funding provides **creating:excellence** with an initial operating surplus, although this reduces to around £11,500 by the end of 2005/2006 (this does not include any reserves raised from other sources of income).

Summary

We believe that the resources identified are the minimum needed to deliver the range of services we have identified through the research work so far and the consultation process. They rise from £0.75 million to £1 million a year over the three years. This is significantly more than our research reveals other regions are considering investing in their regional centres.

However, we consider the funding sources identified to be strong and the levels justifiable. Of course, if we had unlimited resources we could do more. But resources are limited, and we want to be satisfied that the extra £1 million set out in this plan on top of the nearly £1 million already approved provides value for money and has a real effect.

Programme, targets and milestones

The programme for **creating:excellence** for this year mainly comes from the action, development and project plans the modules have produced. A lot of early activity is based on collecting information, although some services are planned (for example, learning events). We have identified the following activities from the plans.

- Attitude and awareness survey – MSS Research (**creating:excellence**)
- Launch of Regeneration South West Network and first newsletter (regeneration and renewal)
- Mapping strategies, programmes and initiatives (Design South West and Funding South West)
- Mapping funding advice (Funding South West)
- Mapping networks (**creating:excellence** and partnership)
- Mapping partnerships and partnership learning needs (partnership)
- Regional Scoping Study on Learning – University of the West of England and Cornwall Business School (regeneration and renewal)
- Performance benchmarking (Design South West, and regeneration and renewal)
- Produce Architecture, Planning and the Built Environment learning strategy – De Facto appointed (Design South West)
- Set up design select committee (Design South West)
- Study on the need for regional architecture centres, including proposals for a Plymouth Architecture Centre (Design South West)
- Pilot projects, including setting up a design review panel (Design South West)
- Developing the Funding Advisors' Network (Funding South West)
- Issuing newsletters (Funding South West)
- Developing websites and databases (all modules)
- Sponsoring learning events (all modules)

We look at **creating:excellence**'s support for events in detail in the module plans. For regeneration and renewal we have included a detailed list of learning events sponsored by the NRU. Other modules have been less specific, but are centred around the general learning on the subject matter of the module.

As a result, the Design South West (DSW) module would like to sponsor existing design seminars in the region, and the partnership module is planning a number of partnership fairs. The Funding South West (FSW) module is planning to hold events for funding stakeholders and funding advisors, and other learning events on funding.

The University of the West of England (UWE) and Cornwall Business School (CBS) report makes recommendations covering the structure and resources needed for learning, which are reflected in this plan. It makes recommendations on the support to individuals and groups by working with existing providers and through web-based support, and the learning methods.

The module proposals are replaced by the UWE and CBS report. The management board will be responsible for examining the proposals in detail and deciding how much they accept and will put into practice as a programme.

This will be a matter for **creating:excellence** to decide through its learning advisory group and as staff are appointed to develop and organise learning events.

At the moment, **creating:excellence** does not organise learning events. In the future, it will need to do more to fill gaps or raise standards. **creating:excellence** may want to develop its programme of learning events (as we suggest in section 4).

Suggested targets and milestones

Year 1 (2003-2004 development)

- Launch the Regeneration Network and website (include links to regen.net and their national links and to other centres for excellence in the other regions) – achieved 15 May 2003.
- Set up a new management board in October 2003, with meetings at least every three months after that.
- Recruit the key staff for **creating:excellence** – three in post by March 2004, and the rest by September 2004.
- Hold key networking and social events on relevant issues. Target – two events a year in each sub-region.
- Open at least one sub-regional **creating:excellence** outlet (for example, brand Bristol Architecture Centre as Design South West and put in the **creating:excellence** logo and phone access).
- Set up the design review panel and hold at least one meeting.
- UWE and CBS completed a report on 'Learning for Regeneration and Renewal' by the end of September 2003.
- Order a study of regeneration programmes and initiatives operating in the South West, including details of funding – report to be available by 31 March 2004.

- Publish two further editions of the Network newsletter in November 2003 and February 2004. Stop producing the newsletter as soon as everyone has access to the websites.
- Discuss with Regeneration and Renewal Magazine a South West newsletter to people living in the South West. **creating:excellence** will market regeneration and renewal to the Regeneration South West Network database.

Year 2 (2004/2005 operational)

- **creating:excellence** official launch in April 2004 – access to courses, events, list the people willing to exchange project experience – target 1000 people a year going to learning events **creating:excellence** has sponsored.
- Launch an e-newsletter in May 2004 – an electronic summary of items from the newsletter with in-built links to the website. Send it to everyone on the network who has said they want to receive newsletter updates – target 1000 people for each e-newsletter.
- Target for Regeneration South West Network – 2000 members registered by 30 September 2004.
- Target hits for the website – a 200% increase in general web hits over that experienced in 2003/2004 – the number of registered users using the site each month will be identified as a target once a pattern of use emerges.
- Add a library of case studies to the website and provide links to websites with national and international examples of regeneration practice by April 2005.
- Establish **creating:excellence** key staff in their own office base by June 2004.
- Create a physical regeneration library – invite people to donate documents and encourage drop-in visitors to use it.
- Publish a series of guides, giving paper versions of signposting (lists of organisations and contact details in the region and beyond) – target at least three during the year.
- Launch at least three further **creating:excellence** satellite 'outlets', all with public access, computer links and social areas (for example, a café and library area).
- Hold at least seven regeneration café events – social evenings and debates (at least one in each sub-region).
- Sponsor regeneration seminar events and exchange visits – aim for all regeneration project managers to visit at least one other project a year (that is, at least 2000 visits).

Year 3 (2005-2006)

- First round of exchanges and visits – target 50 foreign visitors to the South West and 50 practitioners on visits to other countries.
- Set up at least two further satellite outlets to provide comprehensive regional cover.
- Introduce the pilot mobile service – aim for 100 areas visited for an average of three days in each area.
- Assess what is working and what is not working.
- Develop new activities or remove ones that are not effective.

Outputs and outcomes

The milestones shown above have targets associated with them. To measure outcomes, we need to set a baseline (a minimum standard) for all the **creating:excellence** activities against which we can measure progress. We are already carrying this out in some cases – for example, the architecture, planning and the built environment module have ordered work which will result in a clear view of gaps in the processes that result in good design. Design South West will then set about filling those gaps.

Similarly, the Regional Scoping Study of Learning for Regeneration and Renewal has reviewed the supply and range of learning resources and made recommendations for improving them. In the case of regeneration events and access to information, some of the development work by the modules and consultation during 2003 also creates a baseline.

creating:excellence staff will develop further baseline measures and record activity rates and achievements. In year 3, we should arrange for an independent evaluation of progress against targets and in relation to the baselines measured.

The main outputs against which we can measure the performance of **creating:excellence** for monitoring purposes are shown in the following table.

creating:excellence output targets			
	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Network members	-	2,000	3,000
Website hits (member login)	-	5,000	20,000
Number of events organised	15	15	15
Number of events sponsored	10	20	30
Number of 'foreign' visits arranged	-	5	5
Number of 'foreign' visitors involved	-	50	50
Number of visits by network members	-	1,000	1,000

creating:excellence output targets			
	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Jobs created by or within creating:excellence (full-time equivalent) Total in post	1/2 4	7 1/2 8	2 1/2 10
Learning opportunities			
Courses sponsored	5	20	30
Courses attended	100	500	1,000
Events attended	750	1,400	2,000
National Best Practice awards secured in the region	-	5	10

If **creating:excellence** is effective in delivering services, the outputs shown above will also be reflected in improved outcomes. These are difficult to measure, but those associated with raising standards in regeneration and renewal could include:

- increased investment in regeneration projects through extra funding won from the Government, Europe and the private sector;
- increases in average earnings throughout the region, with a more even distribution across the sub-regions;
- a reduction in the number of wards featuring in the top 20% of the Index of Multiple Deprivation;
- better information on urban and rural neighbourhoods to influence regeneration activity; and
- mainstreaming (introducing lessons learned from successful regeneration programmes into the major public services).

Monitoring and evaluation

The targets and output measures suggested in the previous section provide for effective management by the management board. **creating:excellence** must also answer to the Partnership Forum for those outputs. The outputs suggested are all SMART – specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic and timed.

Some will need special arrangements for effective measurement. For example, the website will need to include a counter to measure hits, and what is meant by a 'hit' will need to be defined – is it each page visited, number of downloaded items, links used and so on? So far, we have used members logging in as a positive measure.

Other outputs are easier to measure (for example, names on a database, numbers of events and attendances). The Government sets targets for learning opportunities, and provides a definition which distinguishes between type of opportunity and how long it lasts. **creating:excellence** may want to amend the targets suggested to:

make sure that they can measure them and put arrangements in place to collect the information to satisfy sponsors; and

make sure that the 'right' audience is both targeted and benefiting from the opportunities provided through **creating:excellence**.

creating:excellence will also be able to record any changes in regional practice resulting from its work. For example, the regional funding panel may develop easier procedures for applying for funding, which would have significant benefits to the people applying and to the organisations whose officers must assess applications.

creating:excellence will encourage the people involved to evaluate regeneration activity. Involving all stakeholders, but particularly end users, allows those running regeneration schemes to learn as they go and change their practice to make it more effective and long-lasting.

Some may need an outside agency to help them start the process and build the understanding and confidence of stakeholder groups, but the skills can be learnt and the approach can then often be followed without help. The experience in the Evaluation Trust shows that the benefits can be great.

Case studies that used this approach would benefit much more. A lot of the existing evaluation of regeneration has focused mainly on outputs and outcomes, and many case studies are not particularly easy to learn from. The advantage of evaluation is that it draws on the experience and points of view of everyone involved, whose goals and assessments may vary considerably. (It is often by then bringing them together that a better way forward can be found.)

creating:excellence will also be able to monitor any new networks or groups that promote effective partnership in regeneration, as well as possibly reducing the number through more effective networking arrangements. These may arise from **creating:excellence's** networking activities.

We can measure outcomes using the methods we have already mentioned. These will include:

- evaluating courses – at the end of the course and by using a follow-up survey;
- assessing how satisfied practitioners are with services;
- assessing any changes in practice resulting from **creating:excellence** activity;
- assessing any initiatives arising from regeneration café debates; and
- assessing changes in attitude.

The proposed budget provides resources for carrying out surveys. Indeed, we are planning a follow-up for April 2004 to the awareness survey carried out in April 2003 by MSS Research.